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BY THE SENATE,

FEBRUARY 26, 1868.

Read and 200 copies ordered to be printed.

By order,

AUGUSTUS GASSAWAY,
Secretary.

REPORT

OF THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

TO VISIT THE

REFORMATORY

AND

Beneficiary Institutions

OF THE STATE, SO FAR AS RELATES TO THE

MARYLAND PENITENTIARY.

ANNAPOLIS:

WM. THOMPSON, OF R., PRINTER.

1868.

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REPORT

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JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

TO INVESTIGATE

REFORMATORY

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Penitentiary Institutions

OF THE STATE, AND THE AS RELATES TO THE

MARYLAND PENITENTIARY.

ARRANGED BY

WM. THOMPSON, OF R. TREVEN

1868.

REPORT.

The Committee made a thorough inspection of this prison of the State, and were materially assisted in its labors, in that connection, by the Directors and Warden of that institution.

The apparent healthful condition of the convicts, and their cleanly appearance, indicated that everything consistent with the necessary restrictions of prison discipline, had been done for them which experience and human foresight could suggest, to maintain a desirable sanitary condition, and the medical records of the prison exhibit the fact that appearances in that connection have not proved deceitful.

The alacrity, seemingly, with which the prisoners plied themselves to their tasks, gave to the place more the semblance of a thriving manufacturing village, than of a penitentiary department of workshops, where labor is inflicted as a part of the penalty for infractions of the law. Those thus engaged really exhibited upon their faces expressions of cheerfulness, in striking contrast with the stolid countenances of such as were unemployed.

At the date of the examination the inmates numbered 700, and were divided in sexes and colors as follows:

281	White	Males.
6	"	Females.

287 Total Whites.

337	Black	Males.
76	"	Females.

413 Total Blacks.

The numbers employed under contract at mechanical labor were divided as follows:

At broom and cedar and oak ware work, 71 white males, and 57 colored males. Total, 128.

At manufacturing of cabinet ware, 57 white males, and 34 black males. Total, 91.

At tin can work, 30 white males, and 26 black males. Total, 56.

At shoemaking, 29 white males, and 6 black males. Total, 35.

Making the gross number of white males 187, and the gross number of black males 123.

There are, also, under contract at paper match box making, 40 colored females. Total engaged under contract, 350 persons. With the exception of those engaged in washing, cleaning up and cooking, the balance have no work to perform, and hence are a "dead expense" to the State.

It is gratifying to be able to say that the comfortable and cleanly clothing of the prisoners, the bed and bedding, appointments of the dormitories of the prison, the general appearance of the grounds, and the workshop departments, all evidence the most faithful and effective management upon the part of those charged with conducting the Institution.

Such, however, has been the very great increase of prisoners for the last two years, that it has produced a truly lamentable deficiency of sleeping room. The accommodations in this respect are not more than ample for the comfort of four hundred. There are but 320 single cells or rooms in the eastern dormitory, and 64 of these should not, with a due regard for the physical condition of the convicts, be occupied for sleeping apartments. In the old or west wing of the prison, the sleeping apartments are much larger than those of the east wing, and might, if space was the only desideratum, accommodate four persons to each room. These are now occupied by nine to each apartment, which is much beyond their proper capacity. This is objectionable, not only on the score of the health of the occupants, but it is to be regretted, because in the contact of numbers it opens the door for plots and contrivances for prison escapes, and becomes a school-house in the teaching of crime, and by familiar recitals of offences, places upon the horrid image of vice a comelier front. Notwithstanding this expedient necessarily adopted for the want of room, the Warden has been compelled to sleep in a single room—measuring less than fifty feet each way—one hundred and sixty colored male prisoners. In such a condition of affairs, if an infectious or contagious disease should make an incursion within the walls of the prison, the mortality therefrom would be startling.

In the judgment of the Committee, the General Assembly should not longer delay the investing the Directors of the Institution with the full authority for constructing proper dormitory departments, and the placing at their disposal the

amplest means to that end. Considerations of humanity suggest that the work should be promptly accomplished.

The financial condition of the State, and the great weight of taxation that is pressing down the energies of its citizens, render it, in the judgment of the Committee, inexpedient either to purchase a site elsewhere and construct thereon suitable buildings, or to purchase additional grounds on the northern or eastern limits of the prison walls, with a view of erecting buildings on the new space acquired. The first measure would, it is believed, involve an outlay of a million dollars, and the one last named would, perhaps, cost three hundred thousand dollars.

It would, to be sure, be most desirable to extend the boundaries of the prison ; but it is the opinion of the Directors that both of the measures of improvement referred to, are dispensible under the existing condition of things viewed in connection with a depleted State Treasury and a tax burthened people. They think that two buildings for dormitory departments of the capacity of 80 by 40 feet, of five stories, might be erected, one on the right, and the other on the left of the inner gate of the prison, capable of accommodating at least 250 prisoners ; and if further additional departments should in the future be rendered necessary, additions could be made to the wash house building for the accommodation of the female convicts, and the room which the last named now occupy, could be used for the accommodation of the males. The whole cost of these improvements will require an appropriation of sixty or seventy thousand dollars.

There is in your Committee no division of sentiment upon the theory that the State should do one of three things, and that is to purchase a new site on the margin of the city boundary, and erect buildings thereon for all the purposes of the Institution, or extend the boundaries of the present site, and erect buildings thereon, or make the improvements last named in the preceding paragraph.

To the General Assembly the arbitrament of the question is submitted, as one invoked by considerations of humanity.

WASHINGTON A. SMITH, *Ch'm.*
ISAAC M. DENSON,
O. HAMMOND,

Senate Committee.

Z. POTEET, *Chairman.*

J. R. BLAKE,
A. S. PERCY,
H. BECK,

House Committee.



